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THE LEAPING OUANANICHE

What It Is,
Where, When and How to Catch It



By EUGENE MCCARTHY
Bibliothèque,
Le Séminaire de Québec,
3, rue de l'Université,
Québec 4, QUE.



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A First Word

SO LITTLE has been written about ouananiche fishing, its modes and its merits, its charms and its rewards, that there is call for a handbook of specific information concerning the fish and of definite instructions in the art of its enticement. Impelled by the obligation which rests upon every sportsman to give his fellows in the craft the fruit of his own experience and knowledge, I have prepared this brochure. Its purpose is to put into compact and intelligent form all that may be necessary for the guidance of newcomers in the picturesque haunts of this noble game fish.

The volume is dedicated to my fellow sportsmen; to all those who may find in it practical helpfulness; to all who in the freedom and freshness of the woods may give over for a time the tax of business, and as did Izaak Walton himself, may find in fishing forgetfulness of the vexations and worries of life.

E. McC.

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What It Is

Five years ago, I accidentally heard that away to the north in the wilds of Canada, there was a new fishing territory opened up to the angler, the Lake St. John region; and I heard, too, for the first time, the name of that great fish, the ouananiche.

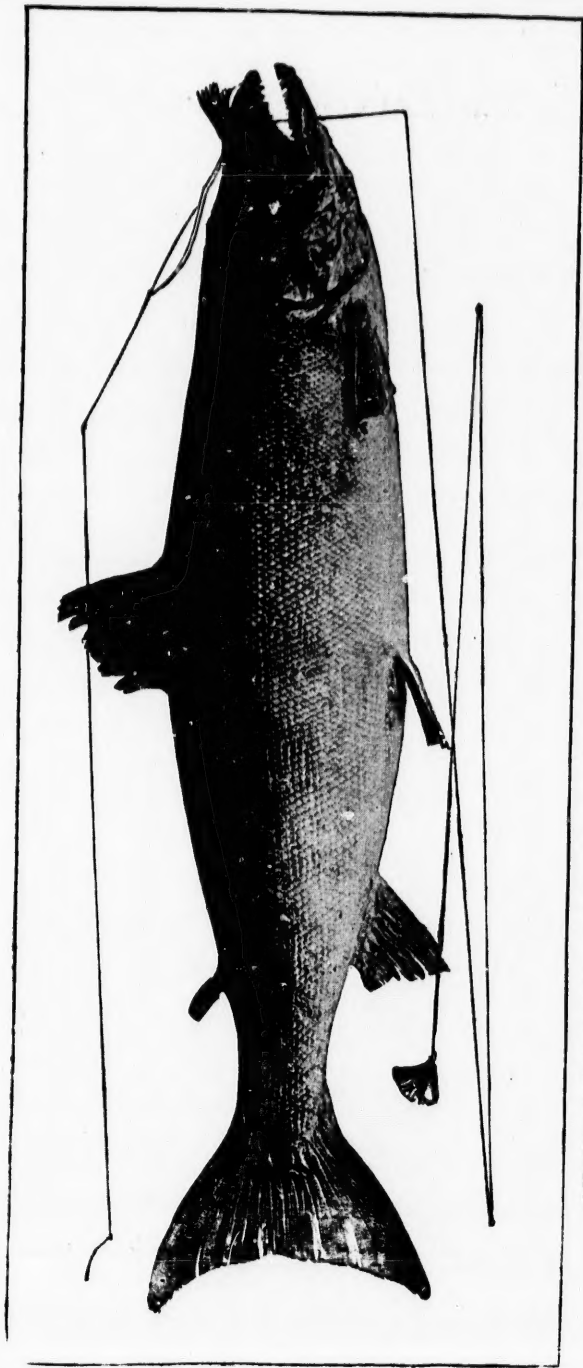
I at once made the trip, for I was completely worked up over the glowing accounts I had heard; and finding them to be all truth, and no fiction, I became a most enthusiastic admirer of the sport to be had in that country, and have spent a month or more there each year since.

The fighting qualities of this fish are so great that they pass understanding, and with five years of experience in angling for them, I conclude each year that I know less about how to hook, handle and land them.

The Leaping Ouananiche

True, I have always saved enough to satisfy in point of numbers, but it does hurt one's pride to feel at the end of each day's catch, that $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of fish has frequently outwitted 225 pounds of man; and that the man's superior intelligence has availed him only to the extent of saving less than half of the pugnacious ouananiche that have become acquainted with his hook.

The word ouananiche is a new one but recently in use amongst anglers, as it represents a new member of the salmon family, found in a new section of country, and is a fish but little known, even at present. Already classed above the black bass and brook trout as a fighter, and ranking second only to the salmon (*Salmo salar*), it is destined to become the most sought after and noted of our game fish. It is peculiar alone to Lake St. John in the Province of Quebec and its tributaries, and these waters having been practically opened to easy access within a few years only, the existence of this wonderful fish is rapidly attracting the attention of noted fishermen. How much tackle will be broken, how many rods smashed, and arms lamed, will result from the



OUANANICHE OF LAKE ST. JOHN.—TAKEN BY EUGENE MCCARTHY.—WEIGHT $7\frac{1}{2}$ LBS.

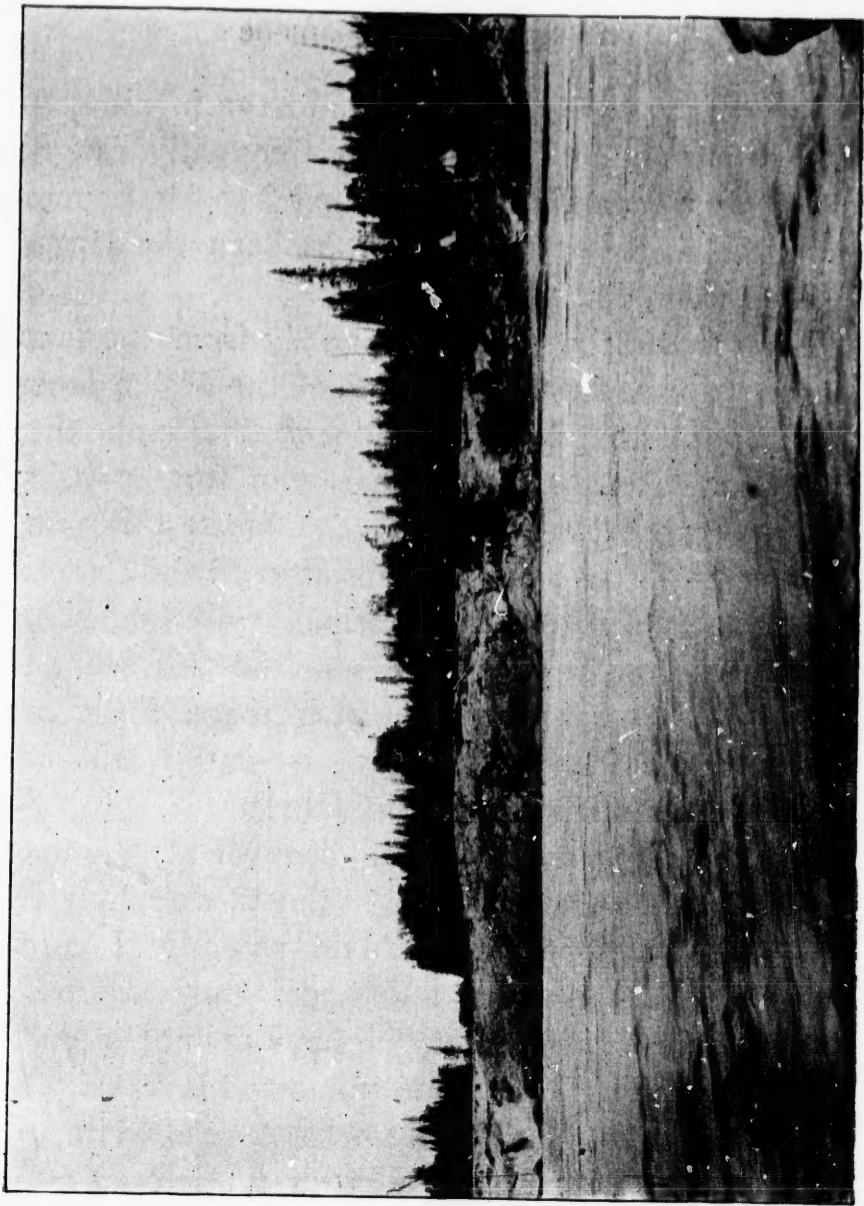
The Leaping Ouananiche

introduction of the ouananiche to the angling public cannot be told.

The outlet of Lake St. John, the Saguenay, has always been noted as a fine salmon river, for it receives smaller fresh water rivers that afford fine spawning grounds. At some remote period, the entire river to the lake afforded easy ascent for the spawning salmon. Some upheaval of nature occurred, raising an impassable barrier at Chicoutimi, a fall of some 60 or 70 feet in height, imprisoning the salmon above. Thus prevented from returning to salt water, they have become landlocked salmon, or ouananiche, depreciated in size only from their original progenitors.

The word ouananiche is from the dialect of the Montagnais Indians who inhabit the country about Lake St. John. They have always been familiar with this fish, and understanding its derivation, have properly named it "*ouanan*," meaning salmon, and "*iche*" the diminutive—"the little salmon."

Report has it that one of 14 pounds was taken in the Little Discharge of the lake several years ago, but none approximating that weight have been taken since. In an ordinary catch the fish



CAMP AT FIFTH FALLS OF THE MISTASSINI.

The Leaping Ouananiche

will average from 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds each, although smaller and larger ones are as frequently caught. I have seen several taken weighing 8 to $8\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, but individually, $7\frac{1}{2}$ pounds has been the largest I have secured.

The ouananiche differs materially from the land-locked salmon found in a few of the Maine lakes. While both are so-called land-locked salmon, they differ somewhat in appearance, the former being caught almost exclusively in the swiftest running rapids entirely with the fly; the latter in the smooth, quiet waters of lakes, and principally with the spoon. Concerning the relative merits of the two fish, and especially the manner of catching them, there can be no comparison or controversy, and I will not therefore go further into the subject.

Upon making a close comparison of a $7\frac{1}{2}$ -pound ouananiche with an 18-pound salmon, side by side, as I had an opportunity to do recently, I could discover little, if any, difference; they are truly congeneric. The contour differs in not even a slight degree. The color, almost black on the back, shades to a light gray on the side, while the belly is silvery white; in all respects colored as is

The Leaping Ouananiche

the salmon. It has a true salmon head, large, round, black spots appear on the gills, the St. Andrew crosses on the body are plentiful, it has the small fleshy fin on top anterior to the tail, peculiar to the salmon family. The fins, especially the caudal, and the tail, are extremely large. The scales are an exact counterpart of those of the salmon, while the flesh is hard and flaky, always pink, although varying in shade, and properly cooked, it is fully equal to, if not better than that of the salmon. When first caught and taken from the water, the back and sides of the ouananiche have a most beautiful peacock blue shade that one must stop and admire. This disappears within a few moments, and gives place to the true salmon color described above.

Its natural lurking place is in swift running rapids, or the foam-covered, whirling, eddying pools below. It seems almost impossible to find water too rapid for these fish, and I have often taken them on experimental casts from a seething, mist-hidden pool directly under a ten or twelve foot heavy fall. The power derived from its large fins and tail, easily enables it to move through,

The Leaping Ouananiche

and rest in the most rapid water, and by the same power it can jump fully twelve feet of sheer fall, as I have frequently seen them do. Take into consideration the rough water in which the ouananiche is hooked and played, as also the fact that a seven-ounce rod is holding a ground and lofty tumbling fish against this current, and some idea can be had of the merits of this fishing. Such is the ouananiche, or land-locked salmon of Lake St. John. Akin to the salt-water salmon in every particular, except size, it is a beautiful fish to look upon, the strongest and hardest fighter that I have ever met with, one that tests the tackle and skill of the angler to the fullest extent; in total, the king of fresh-water fish.

One of the best descriptions of the game qualities of the ouananiche that I have ever seen, appeared in the *Quebec Chronicle* a few years ago, and it so impressed me that I have always had it in mind since. It is so germane to the subject in hand, that it is worthy of repetition, and I will reproduce it here:

"In proportion to their size, these ouananiche are the gamiest fish that swim. They are pecu-

The Leaping Ouananiche

liar to Lake St. John and its tributaries; but hook a respectable ouananiche in the boiling waters of the Grand Discharge, and you have entered upon a fight as different in comparison with other fish, as is that with a dark-colored trout hooked in the heaviest rapids, compared with the half-hearted struggle of a dainty fingerling in a crystal lake. In proportion to his avoirdupois, he can do more tackle smashing, pound for pound, than any fish that swims. His leaps are terrific; he can give a black bass long odds, and then show him points in high jumping."

Where

I well remember examining a map of the Province of Quebec to find Lake St. John, and how to get there. Located as it is, two hundred miles due north of the city of Quebec, and the map showing but little settlement, and giving only an imperfect idea of what is beyond, I felt as though I was going to leave the confines of civilization far behind.

An examination to-day of the latest map of Canada, will convey merely an idea of the vastness of the primeval, unsettled forest without any detail. Especially north of Lake St. John is this true; a few tracings showing only the rivers will indicate all—and how little—known of the territory. But little effort is being made by the Government to explore and map it, and I firmly be-

The Leaping Ouananiche

lieve that American sportsmen will discover the topography first, in their desire to find new hunting and fishing grounds. Lake St. John is by far the largest body of water to be found for several hundred miles north of the St. Lawrence River. Bearing the Indian name Pikouagami, this inland sea measuring fully 30 miles across in any direction, lies deep in the midst of the old Laurentian Mountains, a marvel of beauty to the artist, a paradise to the angler. Tributary to the lake are some eighteen rivers, large and small, flowing from all points of the compass. The most noted are the Ashuapmouchouan from the northwest, the Mistassini from the north, the Peribonca from the northeast, the Metabetchouan and Ouiatchouan from the south, the Ouiatchouaniche and Iroquois from the west. The three first named rivers are respectively 300, 350 and 400 miles in length, very deep, and will average from one and a half to two miles wide at their mouth.

For all this great inrush of water, but one outlet is provided by nature, the Saguenay River, or as it is termed until it reaches tide water, the Grand Discharge. Taking its course through a mountain

The Leaping Ouananiche

chasm filled with rocks, rapids and falls, this great body of water hurls itself against and over the opposing barriers with mighty strength, boiling, surging and leaping with an indescribable roar and confusion, until with its final plunge at Chicoutimi, as the dark, mysterious Saguenay, it quietly seeks the sea.

The south shore of Lake St. John, cleared back for a distance of about three miles, is settled to some extent; back of this, two-thirds of the distance to Quebec, is an unbroken forest. From the lake north to St. James Bay, it is absolutely unsettled with the exception of a few Hudson Bay Company posts and depots for supplies. Primeval forest, a network of rivers and lakes! Who can fully gauge the success that awaits the hunter or fisherman who penetrates it? Properly, the abiding place of the ouananiche, the Lake St. John country offers as well unequalled trout fishing and splendid hunting for large and small game. Connected now with Quebec by the Quebec and Lake St. John Railroad, the trip is made in eight hours, through a wild, wooded mountain country, the picturesqueness of which relieves the journey

The Leaping Ouananiche

from monotony and fatigue. On arrival is found the Hotel Roberval, perfect in all respects, every facility being offered the sportsman for his success and every effort put forth for the comfort of all. Within twenty-four hours ride of New York, these Canadian Adirondacks are as accessible and convenient in all ways as are the Adirondacks of New York State.

Ouananiche fishing is found only in Lake St. John, the various rivers flowing into it, and the Grand Discharge. None of the surrounding lakes, unless in direct connection with the rivers, contain them. At the first glance this is apparently a small and circumscribed territory. How quickly, however, will the first visit dispel that idea; the magnitude of the lake, the length and breadth of the rivers, will prove that there is ample room for the multitude of fishermen who may visit it.

All this territory, beginning some 10 or 12 miles south of the lake, including 12 miles of the Grand Discharge, and extending north to the watershed of the great rivers mentioned, embracing all the territory drained by them, in extent over 100,000 square miles, is owned by, or leased to, Mr. H. J.

The Leaping Ouananiche

Beemer of Montreal. Upon the completion of the railroad from Quebec, Mr. Beemer, recognizing the value of the country to sportsmen, erected the magnificent Hotel Roberval, and threw open without charge this immense preserve to patrons of the house. Three years later, the Island House at the Grand Discharge was built under the same management, for the convenience of fishermen at that point. A daily communication across the lake, between the two hotels, is maintained by the large sidewheel steamer "Mistassini."

Naturally the most convenient place to visit, and affording at all seasons good average fishing, the Discharge attracts the greater number of visitors, but the fishing pools are numberless, and there is ample room for all. The supply of ouananiche is in reality inexhaustible, and it is certain that this and the succeeding generation of anglers will fail to deplete them. For trips up any of the rivers, the start is usually made from the vicinity of the Roberval, guides and canoes being engaged there. Provisions, tents, blankets, camp kits—in fact, everything needed for a comfortable camp—are furnished at the hotel.



DINNER IN PROSPECT.

The Leaping Ouananiche

To those intending to visit Lake St. John, I would advise that nothing except necessary clothing and tackle should be taken, and nothing different in clothing from that used in the New York Adirondacks. Although much further north than the Adirondacks, the weather is quite warm, with occasional very hot days, the nights only proving cold. The country is so vast, the sport both in hunting and fishing so varied, the facilities for reaching it so good, the conveniences for comfort so complete, that it seems impossible for one to make a trip there and return dissatisfied.

How different is all this from the Adirondack region of New York, which formerly offered plenty of fishing and hunting; and from its nearby location, so easy of access, has been, and is the Mecca of thousands of sportsmen. The relentless lumberman, a railroad dividing this region in twain, other connecting roads under way, have all conspired to bring about the early clearing of the forest, and the rapid disappearance of the deer and trout, formerly so abundant. Many preserves have been taken up by clubs for the use of their members only, thus reducing a territory already

The Leaping Ouananiche

circumscribed, open to other seekers for sport, to small and confined sections that are fairly highways of travel, and overrun. Others recognize these facts as well as I, and that the end must come—is near at hand. Nothing therefore is left but to change one's grounds. The Lake St. John country offers every inducement; a new country, and a new fish, plenty of trout and game, will reward the sportsman so amply, that he will exclaim, as did I, "Eureka!"

When

The question as to the proper time to go to Lake St. John for ouananiche is often asked me. Fortunately, the season is of such duration, and the fishing always so good, that it will suit the vacation time of almost all.

The season for ouananiche fishing is at any time from the breaking up of the ice in the spring, until the close of the open season. The fishing is always there, good at all times during the time mentioned, but must be sought after in different waters as the season advances.

The ice breaks up in Lake St. John anywhere from May 15th to June 1st, generally about May 20th. The Hotel Roberval opens about June 1st, and closes September 15th, thus accommodating

The Leaping Ouananiche

anglers at all times. Between these dates is the proper time for ouananiche; before June 1st it is too early and cold. With September 15th begins the close season, extending to December 1st. From the breaking up of the ice until about June 10th to 15th, the fishing is entirely in the bays at the mouth of the smaller rivers emptying into the lake, notably the Ouiatchouan, Ouiatchouaniche, and Metabetchouan. From June 15th to July 1st to 10th the fishing is confined to the Grand Discharge.

Following this, the July, August and September fishing is to be had at best in the larger rivers, the Ashouapmouchouan, Mistassini, and Peribonca. As these latter months advance, the ouananiche must be followed on their course up these rivers towards the spawning beds.

Fair fishing can be had in the Discharge at all times, but a good angler appreciates fishing best, when success is attended by a fair amount of work to attain it. Therefore will he seek the more distant pools of the rivers last mentioned, and always return satisfied with his trip, the unequalled sport he has had, and his catch. It is

The Leaping Ouananiche

no exaggeration to say that good catches can always be had. True, there are days when,

"Wind from the east,
The fish bite least,"

prevail, the elements conspire to prevent, or the fish themselves are not running. However, a week or ten days spent at the proper place at the proper times mentioned, will insure a satisfactory catch.

In five years' experience I have heard but one opinion in regard to catching this land-locked salmon, and that is that it far surpasses fishing for any other fresh-water fish.

There have been a very few who visited Lake St. John with only one or two days in which to fish, and being limited in time, had necessarily to go to the Grand Discharge, although either too late in the season for that point, or had a day when the fishing was not at its best, entailing poor catches, or little sport. Ouananiche, like trout or bass, will at times fight poorly, but only at times. To-day deadened and stupefied by the conditions of the water and elements, to-morrow very much alive and fighting as they alone can fight.

The Leaping Ouananiche

A hurried trip to Lake St. John for fishing is not to be advised. At least two weeks should be taken, which, excluding the time spent on the journey, will leave at least a week or ten days— sufficient to visit any point where the best fishing may prevail.

For fishing the Grand Discharge, the fisherman makes his headquarters at the Island House, making daily canoe trips to the various pools; or, if preferred, a camping trip can be made as far down as Isle Maleine. It is beyond the power of description to convey an idea of the grandeur, excitement and thrilling experiences which attend canoe fishing in the Discharge. Seemingly impassable rapids are descended, the skill of the Canadian, or Indian canoemen guiding the canoe easily between and around rocks, through swift currents and heaving pools, now crossing rapids close above a fall or the boiling waters below, until one enters fully into the excitement, all fear allayed.

In undertaking a camping trip up the larger rivers, the start can be made by canoe from the hotel, or time can be saved by taking the small

The Leaping Ouananiche

steamer "Undine." In the event of heavy winds, this would be absolutely necessary, as the lake is then impassable for canoes. By taking the steamer, putting the canoes, provisions, etc., aboard and ascending the Peribonca or Mistassini as far as navigation is possible, the greater part of a day can be saved. A like saving can be effected in a trip up the Ashouapmouchouan, by carting canoes and baggage over a fair road around the head of the lake to Bear Falls on the river, where the fishing commences and the canoe trip begins.

A trip that has been but seldom taken and one offering the greatest possibilities for successful fishing, is to leave the river some 40 miles above Lake St. John, thence to go by river and portage to Lake a-Jim, where trout and ouananiche abound. Thence again through various streams, ponds and portage to the Mistassini, where the famous fishing pools of the Fifth Falls can be fished and the return made down that river. At least two weeks are required to make this trip.

The Fifth Falls of the Mistassini, from their formation, afford one of the finest ouananiche pools in the whole territory. The falls are fully 30 feet

The Leaping Ouananiche

in height, and unless the water is of good height, the fish cannot ascend them; as a consequence, the pool below nearly always affords fine fishing. The falls are reached by canoe in a day and a half from the hotel. The Peribonca is usually ascended as far as Lake Tshotagama, distant about 50 miles from the Roberval. On this trip there are eleven falls, around each of which a portage must be made, two days' steady canoeing being necessary to reach the lake. Here are found ouananiche of large size and plentiful, a fine camping place and most magnificent mountain scenery.

I have neglected to state that all trips are made by means of birch bark canoes. These are built by the Indians and are marvels of beauty, strength and lightness. More comfortable by far than a boat, they are absolutely safe. In fact, many waters now accessible through their medium, could not be reached in a small boat of any other description.

Other trips without number can be made, but I have noted only those that I have found to be the easiest and where at the proper time satisfactory success can be had.

The Leaping Ouananiche

It would take a long chapter to describe even a few of the many trips possible for trout and game, and for that reason I have mentioned in detail only those that should properly be made for the best of ouananiche fishing. Mr. Patterson, who has charge of the guides at the Roberval and who for many years was in the Hudson Bay Company's employ at Lake St. John, will suggest and describe numberless places to visit for successful hunting or fishing of any kind. In the past his business has caused him to make trips in all directions, and almost every foot of the territory is perfectly familiar to him. One has but to suggest the kind of sport wanted and the length of time to be spent, and he will plan the trips and arrange all details.

Owing to this arrangement, those visiting Lake St. John for the first time can feel assured that they will know at once the best places to go for good sport and how to reach them.

Ouananiche and Salmon Akin

It has come to my knowledge recently, both through letters received, and articles published in various sporting papers, that some anglers differ as to the genealogy and game qualities of the ouananiche. This I cannot understand.

If an angler, one who from experience can be properly classed as such, has spent a proper length of time fishing for this land-locked salmon, has given time enough to test the fishing in all its phases, cannot give this great fish its proper classification as being the king of game fish, then he is not worthy of the name of angler, and should study the rudiments of the art.

That those who have caught the salmon (*Salmo salar*) can fish for ouananiche, and then state that there is no comparison, similarity, or relationship

The Leaping Ouananiche

existing between the two, leads me to believe that either an attempt at jest or ridicule is aimed at, or bigoted prejudice in favor of salmon fishing is so deeply rooted that excellence in other fishing cannot be appreciated.

I have stated in preceding chapters what my observation deduced from practical experience in ouananiche fishing, running through a number of years, has taught me, but fearing that an individual opinion may not have the proper weight, I shall quote from able authorities on fishing.

Referring to that noted authority, "The Fisheries of the United States," page 470, we find on the subject of ouananiche or land-locked salmon the following: "The habits of successive generations become hereditary traits, and the differences in their life-histories seem to justify the claim of the land-locked to be regarded as a variety of *Salmo salar*. * * * It is to be designated as *Salmo salar*, variety *sebago*. Although both originated in the same primitive stock, it is not probable that one changes to the other—except after many generations, under the influence of forced changes in their environments."

How

“Felt the loose line jerk and tighten;
As he drew it in, it tugged so
That the birch bark canoe stood endwise.”

Aptly do the words of Hiawatha portray, in part, what I wish to describe.

“How!” A small word indeed, but what a task its explanation sets before me to perform. Should I begin by confessing that I do not know how to catch ouananiche myself, I believe that I would approximate the truth. The more time one spends in this fishing, and the more one studies the fish, the sooner one's belief is strengthened that the knowledge which should follow practice grows less instead of greater. With experience in catching ouananiche, one formulates certain ideas as to the proper way to strike them,

The Leaping Ouananiche

to play them, and to land them. Suddenly a change comes over the spirit of the fish, and the supposed proper methods are far better to honor in the breach rather than in the observance. These changes are radical, and oft-occurring; applying as well to just where to find them as to their action when striking and when hooked.

I have before mentioned that the ouananiche are great fighters, surpassing even the trout and black bass in this particular; and it would almost seem as though there was method in their fight, they vary it in quality but not in quantity.

To-day they are to be caught only in the white, boiling water just under a fall, to-morrow in the more quiet water beyond; to-day they fight when hooked, by constantly leaping from the water, to-morrow by running and sulking deep down; now they make prodigious jumps for a passing darning needle, or some other member of the *mouche* family, and are not to be tempted by any of our flies. Again they rise quickly to any color or kind of cast that we may give them.

When an ouananiche is hooked, he is not even half caught; as my guides would say, "*Brebis comp-*

The Leaping Ouananiche

tées, le loup les mange;" truly one should not count their chickens before they are hatched, nor their ouananiche before they are netted.

The ouananiche has one mortal enemy in the pickerel (*brochet*), with which Lake St. John abounds, and which grow to enormous size. I have frequently caught ouananiche bearing large scars, both recent and 'old, showing narrow escapes from the enemy. Perhaps feeling the wound when hooked, and attributing it to their natural enemy, may have something to do with causing them to fight as they will. In any event, the fighting they do is simply tremendous.

In rough water the ouananiche is rarely seen when he takes the fly, the choppy waves concealing his strike. The first intimation will be to see it jump from the water in the vicinity of the cast, and a severe tightening strain on the line. If this occurs when the cast is being drawn in and the rod elevated back, something will break unless it is possible for the tip to be rapidly given. If in smooth water, the strike can be seen, and the tip given at once.

Strike the fish firmly, but without a sharp jerk,

The Leaping Ouananiche

as they usually hook only in the lip, lightly, and the fly is easily torn out. Follow at once by drawing quickly an absolutely tight line, never relax, even an inch. Stop the reel, draw out between the reel and first ring from three to four feet of line taut in the left hand. Give the fish the butt of the rod as much as possible, hold it absolutely tight without giving line except when it leaps; then slightly drop the tip and follow the leap with the necessary line from that held in the left hand. Being held absolutely in check without slack, the fish runs only within a short radius, pulling usually with all its strength; this may result in laming the wrist, but more fish are saved. If preferred, the reel can be used and the ouananiche allowed to run, but they turn and return so quickly that the slack can not easily be recovered; result, that another run with the slack tightens the line with a jerk, the hook is torn out or broken, and the fish gone. Individually, I find an automatic reel preferable, as it will take the slack as rapidly as given, and to it I attribute the saving of many fish. Never hurry the fish, or attempt to lead it to the net until satisfied that it is thoroughly

The Leaping Ouananiche

tired out, and do not relax the strain, or watchfulness, until safely netted. An ouananiche of about 3 pounds weight will require fully fifteen to twenty minutes or more, to kill it, and it will fight hard every moment.

Now it will leap from the water anywhere from two or three to a dozen times, rising fully three or four feet from the surface, returning to the water only to make an immediate wild rush toward the bottom. If near a fall, it will make many attempts to rush under the falling water, or in the rough part of the rapids, there to sulk, pull, and often shake violently to release the hook. Then perhaps, a rush toward the fisherman, a quick turn and deep down again, a moment's rest and then a violent race to and fro, as far as the line will permit. The jumps are quick, and occur when least expected, often following one another in quick succession. In fact, the fish are never at rest, but change their tactics every moment; each fish fights differently, the method pursued in catching one will scarcely apply to the next. The hand and mind must act in unison quickly, and both will be thoroughly occupied. There are so many "*ifs*"

The Leaping Ouananiche

that it is easy to understand how questionable is the saving of the fish after being hooked. *If* well hooked, *if* the hook shall tear out, or *if* the hook, leader, line or rod shall not break. Be prepared to lose, as a rule, more fish than you save; that is the common experience.

In regard to the selection of tackle, the greatest care must be used. I find that an "E" silk line with a 6-foot leader is best, and am always sure that my leaders and flies are new, well made, and will stand a good prior test. An "E" line being heavy, is less liable to break, and cannot be cut by the rocks when drawn across them, as frequently happens in playing a fish. A short leader is necessary to prevent its being tangled in the rough water of the rapids, or from the violent play of the fish.

All anglers have their favorite rods, either split bamboo, lancewood, or greenheart. All are good—the lighter and more springy they are, the better. Rods from $6\frac{1}{2}$ to 8 ounces in weight are the best, although lighter and even much heavier ones are used. The practical point is to have plenty of them, at least two or three, with several

The Leaping Ouananiche

extra tips. Broken rods, and tips especially, are a frequently occurring contingency of ouananiche fishing.

Eight or ten varieties form an ample variety of flies, and most of them should be tied on No. 4 hooks. The Jock Scott, Silver Doctor, Brown Hackle, Cow Dung, Seth Green, Lord Baltimore, Parmacheene Belle, and Scarlet Ibis, I have always found to give me sufficient variety, and I have rarely used anything else. A good supply should be taken, since those not broken soon become worn and battered from violent usage, are useless and need to be frequently renewed. I find, as a rule, that the most successful cast is Cow Dung or Brown Hackle for trailer, and a Jock Scott or Silver Doctor for dropper. Use two flies only, and fasten the dropper at the last knot on the leader next to the line. By doing this, it will skip the surface better, and will take most of the fish, as its action seems to attract them more.

To give advice just how to fish for ouananiche, and to make fishing successful, is an utter impossibility; general information only can be given. It is practically necessary to know what to take in

The Leaping Ouananiche

the way of clothing, tackle, etc., as one is too far removed from a base of supplies to get anything that may be needed. It is necessary also to know what one has to combat with in catching the ouananiche, what to use, and in a general way how to use it. Such knowledge to the angler fishing these waters for the first time, will save him much vexation, a quantity of broken tackle, and perchance some fish. Beyond this, his own acquired experience will be his guide. Experience alone can prove his teacher. As the French say, "*À force de forger on devient forgeron*"—practice alone makes perfect. Previous fishing experience is a great aid, but the ouananiche is so totally different from other fish that it is like learning a new art to successfully angle for and land it.

When fishing the pools in the rivers, it is generally better, and more convenient, to fish from the rocks, but in the Grand Discharge one can more readily reach the pools from a canoe.

Imagine yourself in the midst of a boiling rapid, your canoe dancing and bounding on the troubled waters. You make a cast, and you have hooked an ouananiche, or perhaps two, as sometimes hap-

The Leaping Ouananiche

pens. Here you have excitement beyond compare. Imagine the skill necessary to handle and save them; your varied emotions; your surroundings—all—and then one fully appreciates that he is engaged in the finest fishing known. No fitting eulogy can be given such fishing. Only those who have been fortunate enough to enjoy it can understand and appreciate.

But one proviso is to be made to insure satisfactory success in ouananiche fishing, and that is to take sufficient time to fairly test them in the right waters at the right times mentioned.

Other Sport to be Had

Variety is indeed a spice that adds materially to any kind of a trip undertaken for sport. No matter how good the fishing or hunting for any particular fish or game may be, if other kinds can be obtained in the same neighborhood, one tires of constantly working to secure one, and will seek the other also.

Usually when trips are made, with special kinds of fishing or hunting in view, but little else than that sought can be obtained, and from force of circumstances one must be content, whether the sport be good or bad.

I know of no one section of country that affords such a great variety of fish and game as does the Lake St. John territory; and that too, in almost any part that may be visited. All the smaller

The Leaping Ouananiche

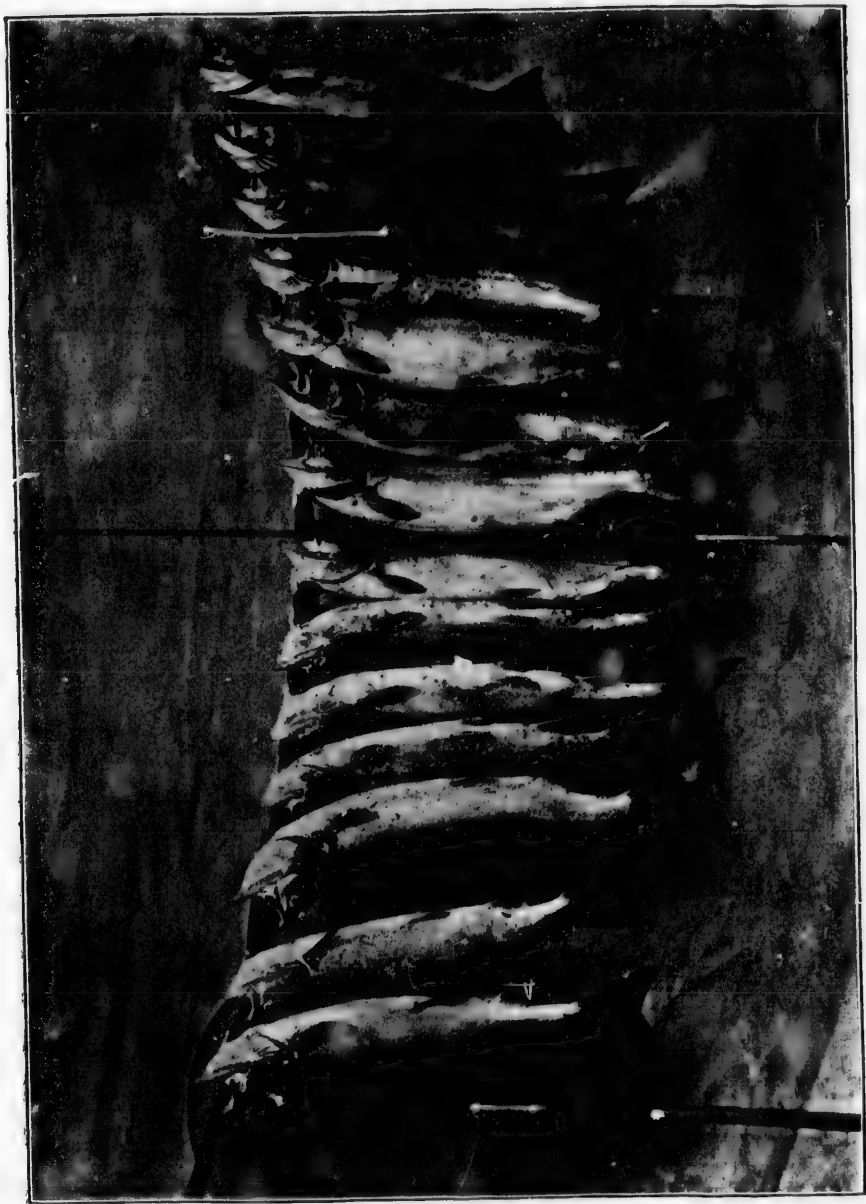
streams and lakes afford the very finest trout fishing. All the larger lakes and rivers contain pickerel and pike (*doré*). Moose are still quite numerous, and caribou very frequently seen. Black bear are met with on all sides. Of the smaller game, ducks of all kinds, and spruce partridge are found in greater numbers than I have ever seen elsewhere. Mink, martin, otter and muskrat are quite plentiful, and beaver occur in limited numbers.

There is such a network of rivers, streams and lakes in this region that it is doubtful if one can go over half a mile in any direction without encountering one or the other. Of this vast number, comparatively few have been fished, and those but little, so that one is given the choice of following beaten trails, or seeking new waters. In either event, the success will prove more than satisfying. Apart from that by the native Indians, who trap almost entirely, but little hunting has been done here; as a consequence the game is very plentiful, and is easily reached. As the season for moose and caribou opens September 1st, and ouananiche fishing closes September 15th, and trout fishing October 1st, September is an ideal month to visit

The Leaping Ouananiche

Lake St. John, as both fishing and hunting are open at the same time. Then, too, the *bête noir* of the woods, the black flies, mosquitoes and punkies, are gone. Of the magnificent trout fishing to be found in these Canadian Adirondacks, enough cannot be said, nor can justice be done it. No "fish stories" can be told of this country, as the possibilities are unlimited. According to the waters you seek, do you get large fish or small, as the case may be.

Last season two of us took in four hours from Lac de Belle Riviere, two hundred and twenty-five trout, eleven weighing $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, and the balance from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. This year in the same waters, with stormy weather, we took exactly the same number in eleven hours, weighing $\frac{3}{4}$ to $2\frac{3}{4}$ pounds. Another catch shown, caught in one pool in an hour, comprised twenty-eight, weighing 90 pounds. These catches mentioned are not isolated cases, but such as any one can make in the same, or many other places. I refer to brook trout (*S. fontinalis*) only, as lake, or salmon trout, are almost unknown in these waters. Fishing with the fly only is practiced, and the hun-

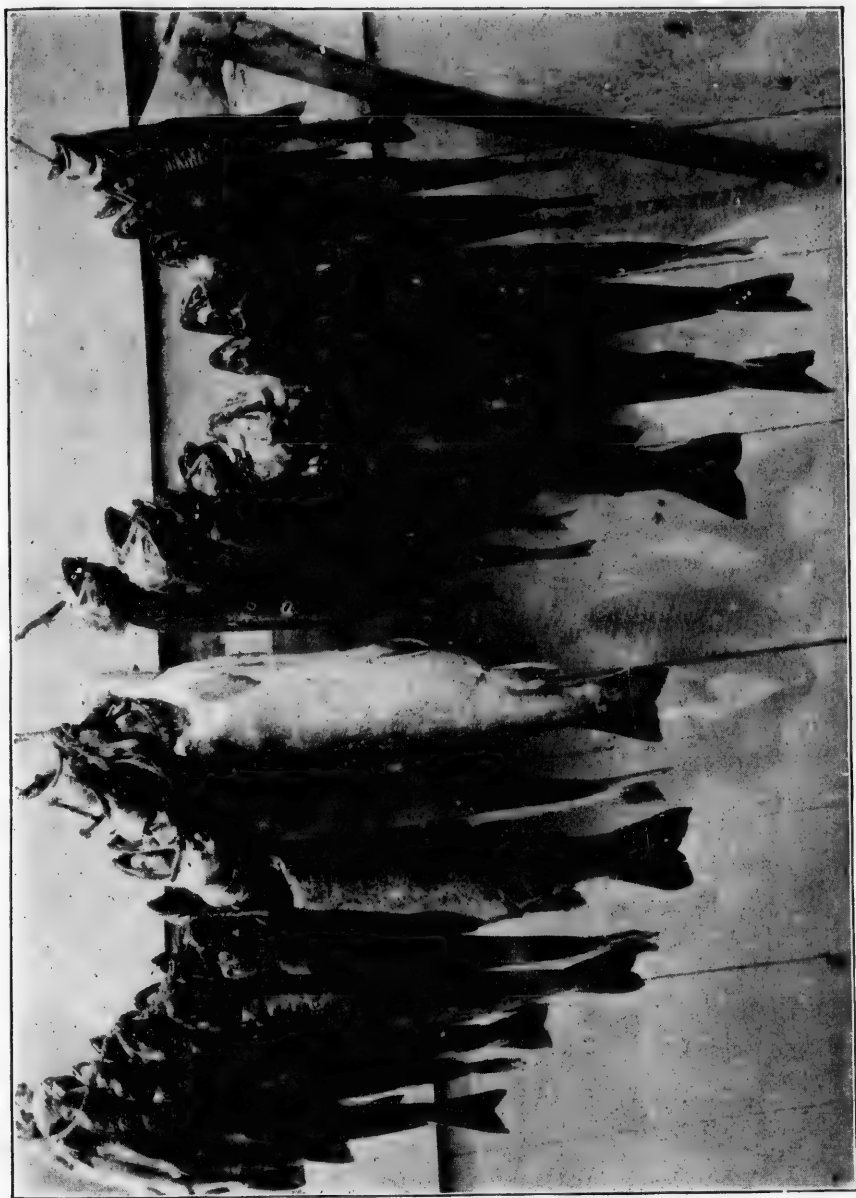


A MORNING CATCH OF TROUT.

The Leaping Ouananiche

gry fish will take almost any lure, plain or gaudy. The same flies and tackle, used in ouananiche fishing, are suitable for trout. In fact, flies with No. 4 hooks are best, as they frequently fail to hook small fish that are not wanted, and would be thrown back. Individual fish have frequently been taken, weighing from six to ten pounds, and many more will be tempted from the deep, black waters in the future, as neither this nor the coming generation will see the fishing impaired. Distant trips must be made for trout as well as ouananiche, although I have frequently caught 150 or more small trout on the Ouiatchouaniche, eight or nine miles distant from the hotel.

Fine pickerel fishing can be had by trolling in Lake St. John, the Grand Discharge, and many of the tributary rivers, some fish of immense size being taken. Those from 12 to 20 pounds are common, and some weighing from 30 to 40 pounds are not infrequently caught. Doré (pike) of good size are also taken, and frequently large ouananiche will take the spoon. Some No. 4 and 7 spoons of various kinds, and strong trolling lines should always be included in the tackle outfit. It

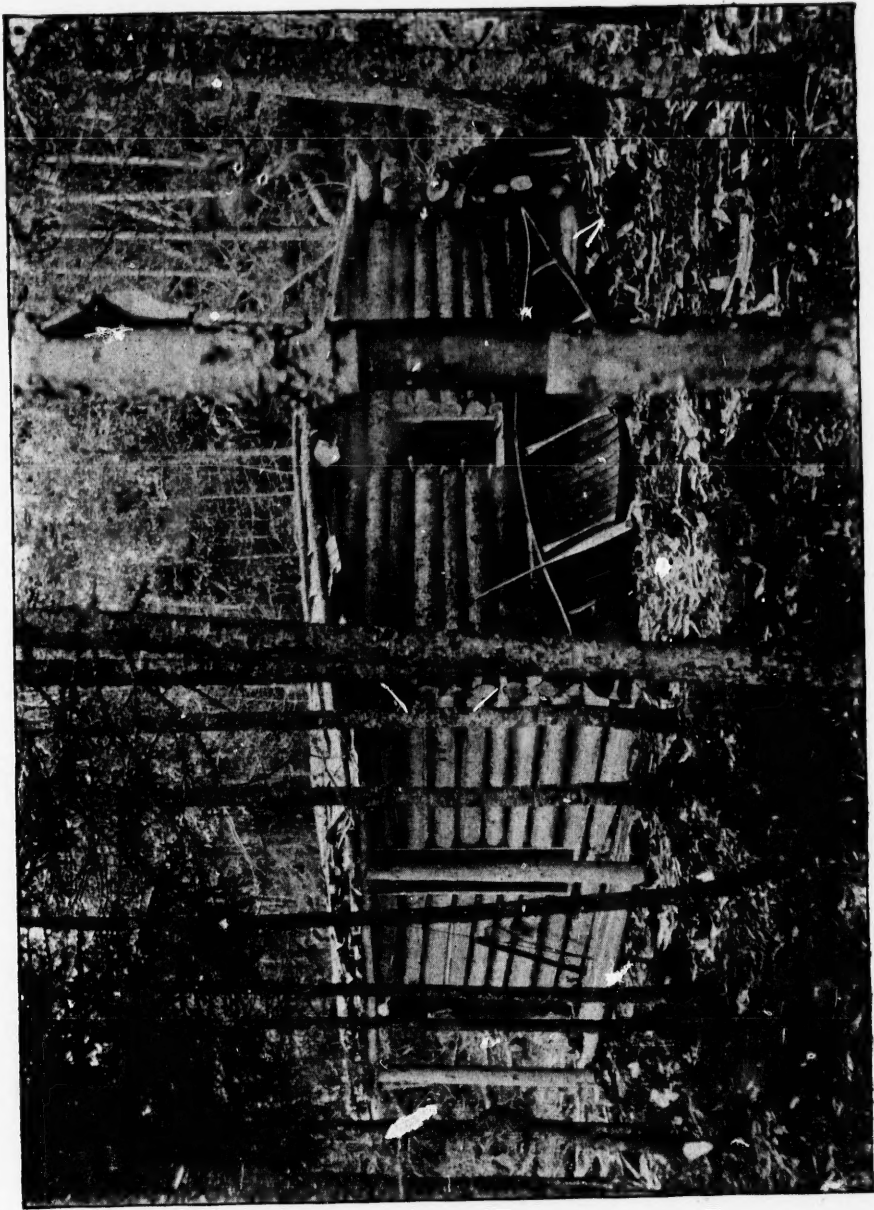


FROM WATERS OF THE TRITON FISH AND GAME CLUB.—A FIVE-HOUR CATCH BY THE
PRESIDENT, SEPT. 27TH, 1893.

The Leaping Ouananiche

is often a relief to change from fly-fishing to trolling, especially when such good fishing can be had in this way. The pickerel caught in these waters are not to be classed as maskinonge, as this latter fish is never found anywhere here.

A visit of great interest—a jaunt to fill in a day between trips—is a trip to the reservation and yearly encampment of the Montagnais Indians at Pointe Bleue, on the south shore of Lake St. John, five miles from the Hotel Roberval. In the midst of the reservation is located a post of the Hudson Bay Company. Here the Indians assemble each year to dispose of the furs secured during the previous winter, in barter for the necessary clothing and for provisions to carry them through another hunting season. Here, too, they build their birch bark canoes, and arrange their hunting grounds. By the 1st of September, the various families have started out, each to the point selected. In all directions they go, many far to the north, seeking the wilds of the Hudson Bay coast. Once arrived, they erect their simple cotton tents, which they heat with a small sheet iron stove, and in which they live during their winter hunt. But few of



CAMP AT TRITON TRACT.

The Leaping Ouananiche

them use firearms, as they successfully rely upon their ingenious traps for both small and large game. This race of Indians, while of the Cree family, differ in that they are very black; mostly Christianized, they are a particularly honest, nomadic people. Their knowledge of this country, near and far, is perfect, and therefore many are selected as guides; and better workers, or more faithful ones, cannot be found. Nearly all speak French—but a few English. In fact, French alone is the language of the country.

From Lake St. John to Chicoutimi, the head of navigation on the Saguenay, intervene 40 or 50 miles of rapids. Many who prefer to return to Quebec by steamer through the far famed Saguenay and St. Lawrence Rivers, make the voyage to Chicoutimi by canoe through these rapids. It is made in a day, and a grand and thrilling trip it is. Easier to imagine than describe, it has been made hundreds of times, and never has a fatal accident occurred. This is owing to the perfect skill of the Canadian and Indian canoemen who make the trip. Brought up from childhood to handle a canoe, they navigate the rapids with absolute safety.

The Leaping Ouananiche

After the novice in these waters has run the first few rapids, the fact that their untutored skill and a sheet of birch bark only separates one from eternity, is forgotten. By those less venturesome, the journey can now be made by rail, as a branch road was completed from Lake St. John to Chicoutimi last year. Too much cannot be said in favor of the Lake St. John country. Its resources for hunting and fishing are absolutely unlimited. Enough of both, as has been proven beyond question, is to be had. A detailed account of the many trips to be taken, would prove nothing more than I have already stated, since what I have written is deduced from actual experience.

My enthusiasm is neither too great, nor unwarranted. One cannot visit this immense country and return with any selfish feelings. There is room for all, and what I have learned from experience I am only too glad to be able to impart to fellow sportsmen, who are seeking a wilderness where sport of all kinds is plenty; where a short or long vacation can be taken with equal success and satisfaction, and at a minimum of expense. All this, and more, can be found in the Lake St. John region.

Chained to Business



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